United Nations S/2012/4

Security Council

Distr.: General
4 January 2012

Original: English

Letter dated 4 January 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from H.E. Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, dated 17 December 2011 (see annex).

I would very much appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Elmi Ahmed **Duale**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 4 January 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia kindly requests that all United Nations Member States immediately support our Government's ban on the production of charcoal by prohibiting the importation of charcoal from Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government further requests that the Security Council consider imposing an international prohibition on the importation of charcoal from Somalia.

In December 2010, the Transitional Federal Government prohibited the production of charcoal throughout Somalia. This decision was announced publicly, and was later communicated to the International Contact Group on Somalia at its 29 September 2011 meeting in Copenhagen. The Transitional Federal Government implemented this measure because charcoal production not only destroys the environment and contributes to food insecurity, but also funds the deadly campaign being carried out by Al-Shabaab.

The charcoal trade has had a devastating effect on Somalia's environment, leading to massive deforestation in the country. This contributes to long-term food insecurity. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted, in his October 2011 report on the protection of Somali natural resources and waters (S/2011/661), that illegal charcoal trading has put livelihoods at risk through the depletion of southern Somalia's primary forest cover, thus exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The Secretary-General also rightly stated, in his speech at the Istanbul Conference on Somalia in May 2010, that some "make millions of dollars from destroying forests for charcoal to sell abroad". He correctly pointed out that such people will resist efforts to create stability in Somalia, which is why the commitment of the international community is essential. Ending the trade will not only greatly weaken Al-Shabaab, but also help save Somalia's natural environment from destruction. Our Government is confident that the loss of charcoal industry jobs will be minimal, and affected workers will move into other, less destructive employment, as they have in areas of the country where Al-Shabaab is not present.

The Al-Shabaab movement that terrorizes our population continues to benefit from the charcoal trade. According to the report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916 (2010) of July 2011 (2/2011/433), Al-Shabaab earns an estimated $15 million annually from taxing the trade in charcoal, representing a significant percentage of its revenue. Given this important link, the Monitoring Group recommended that the Gulf Cooperation Council member States, which are the primary importers, consider imposing a ban on charcoal imports from Somalia. The United Nations and the international community have been supportive of our Government in fighting the scourge of Al-Shabaab, and the efforts have shown results, including the expulsion of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu. Now is the time to put pressure on Al-Shabaab not only militarily, but also financially. Our Government's ban on the export of charcoal will not be fully effective unless other countries support us. Somali charcoal is largely exported to Gulf States; thus, these nations and the wider international community must cease imports of charcoal from Somalia in order for our efforts to have an impact.

There is precedent for such measures. The Security Council temporarily banned Member States from importing Liberian timber and diamonds that were fuelling regional instability, and it continues to ban imports of diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire. Such carefully targeted measures helped those countries on their paths towards peace and security, and we believe Somalia would benefit from a similar effort.

On behalf of the Transitional Federal Government, I formally request that all United Nations Member States be advised to stop purchasing charcoal from Somalia, in respect and support of our domestic ban on charcoal production. I further request that the Security Council consider a resolution prohibiting all United Nations Member States from making such purchases.

(*Signed*) Abdiweli Mohamed **Ali**
Prime Minister
Transitional Federal Government of Somalia